

CLASSIFICATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT

COUNTRY USSR/Germany (Soviet Zone)
SUBJECT Soviet Aviation of Airborne Troops

DATE DISTR. 8 Oct 1954

NO. OF PAGES 3

PLACE
ACQUIREDNO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)DATE
ACQUIREDSUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

50X1-HUM

DATE OF INFORMATION

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECTING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES, WITHIN THE MEANING OF TITLE 18, SECTION 793 OF THE U.S. CODE, OR PROVIDED, ITS TRANSMISSION OR RECEIVING OF ITS CONTENTS TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS PROHIBITED BY LAW. THE REPRODUCTION OF THIS FORM IS PROHIBITED.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

According to an Informational Bulletin of the Voroshilov General Staff Academy, dated April or May 1949, the Soviet airborne troops constitute the general command reserves (supreme command of all services). Such reserves will not be of a static nature, ie, they will be employed at such places as the situation dictates. The Soviet airborne forces can fulfill their missions in close coordination with the ground forces and the VVS. It is expected that airborne drops will be conducted mainly in corps strength but, in any case, not lower than divisional strength. These airborne drops are to be carried out from 150 to 200 km behind the front line simultaneously with the ground forces' offensive. The operations of the airborne troops are calculated on the basis of a period of three days; it is believed that this should be sufficient time for the airborne troops to make contact with the advance columns of Soviet mechanized troops. The missions of the airborne troops are:

- (a) To cut the enemy line of retreat.
- (b) To prevent the enemy from reinforcing his troops at the front.
- (c) To capture important highway and rail bridges and hold them intact for future use by friendly forces.
- (d) To disrupt and demoralize enemy rear areas.

CLASSIFICATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DISTRIBUTION

50X1-HUM

7
50X1-HUM

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

It is the special concern of the Soviet military planners to eliminate, insofar as possible, the possibility of failure before undertaking any military mission. Therefore, an airborne drop more than 200 km deep in enemy territory would be frowned upon because the airborne troops would be isolated for a long time and face the risk of complete annihilation. On the other hand, the execution of an airborne operation closer than 150 km to the front involves a great risk because the closer the landing area to the front, the greater the chances of running into strong enemy troop concentrations. The Soviet doctrine of amphibious invasion constitutes an exception to the above concept. Basically this doctrine calls for the cooperation of ground, naval and air forces. The first phase consists of the softening-up operations executed by long range aviation and naval aviation. Then there is the airborne operation which is carried out simultaneously with the naval amphibious invasion. This doctrine also calls for continuous bombing, by long range aviation, of the areas immediately surrounding the beachhead.

50X1-HUM

Soviet airborne troops are equipped to carry on a continuous offensive for 72 hours after landing in enemy territory. Obviously the three-day period prior to the join-up can be extended if necessary and, in certain circumstances, the airborne troops can last much longer than three days behind enemy lines, specific doctrine covering these situations where the join-up of airborne forces to friendly ground forces would be greater than three days.

50X1-HUM

The tactical depth of 150 - 200 km is considered safest for airborne operations because the enemy usually does not have strong forces concentrated at that depth. It takes about nine hours to parachute out a battle ready corps; consequently, a comparatively safe territory is required for this type of operation. Air-transportable troops are considered usable only in territory where airfields are available to them. Paratroopers, on the other hand, may be parachuted behind enemy lines without particular reference to the availability of airfields.

Each airborne corps is composed of two divisions of airborne troops and one air transport division. However, in operations involving an airborne corps or even a division, the effort of the air transport division may be supplemented by other air transport units in the area. During the actual airborne operation, each airborne corps is provided with cover by two fighter corps. One of these fighter corps escorts the transports enroute to, and returning from, the air landing area. The other fighter corps provides cover for the airborne landing in enemy territory.

The commander of the latter fighter corps is responsible for the safety of the airborne troops until they get to the ground. This commander is, as a general rule, one of the first to land in the area of operations. His landing is effected either by parachute or glider. Once on the ground the fighter corps commander takes personal charge of the fighter corps defending the area. With the aid of his two most important items of equipment (radio and radar), the fighter corps commander spots the approaching enemy aircraft and directs his fighters against them.

The air-transportable troops are landed only after the airborne operation has been successfully completed with the help of the fighter cover and the airhead is established in enemy territory.

It is necessary to bear in mind that Soviet doctrine also calls for a heavy attack by ground attack aviation and by bombers on potential enemy resistance points in the vicinity of the air landing area prior to the initiation of the airborne operation. In this sense "heavy attack" means simply that the pre-airborne operations attack must be of sufficient strength to eliminate the possibility of successful enemy resistance. The objective of the attack would be to surround towns or cities where the enemy might have communications centers, troops or other capabilities which might interfere with the successful execution of the airborne operation.

This information was compiled for the command of the military forces during the 1947-1948 maneuvers in the Kiev Military District. After the maneuvers, the Voroshilov General Staff Academy published an Informational Bulletin on the subject.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

50X1-HUM

- 3 -

5.

There is reason to expect variations and changes in the patterns of Soviet employment of airborne forces. One indication of this was a new, secret manual published in 1948. This publication was a generalized statement with respect to combat for all of the Soviet armed services. It was stressed in this manual that under no circumstances should any governmental or military agency be permitted to set up stereotyped tactical procedures for the field commanders. It pointed out that the experience of World War II had definitely established that commanders who were prone to go "by the book" were invariably less successful than the commanders who made their decisions on the basis of an evaluation of the actual combat situation. This manual was signed by Joseph Stalin.

6.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the present Soviet doctrine does not call for the use of airborne aviation in conjunction with partisan warfare or in connection with the infiltration of enemy territory. For these purposes, the Soviet Directorate of Intelligence has other forces called "Diversionary Groups". These "Diversionary Groups" are of various sizes, but they are not SAF personnel.

- end -

50X1-HUM